



Registered Charity No. 1160314

The Friends of St Peter's Newsletter

Number 21 – Autumn 2023

The Goodwill of Friends



Father Stuart, Rector of St Peter's

I was feeling sorry for myself. It was my first year as Vicar of All Saints, Edmonton, and feeling well settled into my new role I was beginning to make plans for the future. Then I received our inspecting architect's report on the state of the building and

suddenly I had a very new and very pressing set of priorities. Most urgently we needed to completely renew the church tower; bits of masonry, some of them substantial, were falling off, which was not a good look! The repairs were going to be in the region of a third of a million pounds, and we didn't have that sort of money to hand.

One of the first things I did was start a 'Friends of All Saints Edmonton.' Like St Peter's, All Saints was very much at the heart of the local community. It was a church where local children had come for their Harvest festivals and Christmas services, and where classes of schoolchildren had patrolled around with clipboards carefully making drawings of the lectern and completing a map showing where the altar and font were. It was a church where some of those children would then return years later to get married, where their newborns were baptised, where families had come together in times of bereavement. People visited for concerts, plays, poetry evenings and talks. All Saints, like St Peter's, belonged to so many people who valued the building and what it represented very much, even if they didn't necessarily want to spend an hour there on a Sunday morning to hear me preach!

The great power of Friends' groups to harness the goodwill that there is in the wider community towards their parish churches is something I really value and believe in. Church congregations certainly can't shoulder the burden of maintaining the architectural heritage that they're responsible for on their own.

In addition to inviting a community to care for its church, Friends groups also have the capacity to encourage church congregations themselves to look outwards. Congregations, like pretty much any other group of people, can sometimes become quite insular and inward looking. At All Saints the Friends group helped the whole church community to think more deeply about our relationship with the wider community that we were a part of. Friends' groups do so much good on so many different levels.

It's a great privilege for me to succeed Peter Williamson as Chair of the Friends of St Peter's. Peter was one of the founding Trustees of the Friends, when the group was formed ten years ago, and has given faithful and wise service over that decade. Personally, I've greatly appreciated his unfailingly positive outlook; I've also very much appreciated our many and extensive conversations about cricket. I look forward to building on the excellent work that the Friends have already done as we look to grow the membership and our opportunities for fundraising in the years ahead. We got the tower fixed at All Saints, and I now know more than I ever thought I would about the properties of Kentish ragstone.

By Father Stuart

The Jewish Festival of Sukkot



At the start of October, a tent appeared in St Peter's churchyard. This is a Sukkah, a symbolic hut or tabernacle which was erected as

part of the Jewish festival of Sukkot. As part of our Harvest celebrations, St Peter's Church has been celebrating the faith we share with our Jewish friends at South Bucks Jewish Community (SBJC), and we invited them to erect this Sukkah in the churchyard and decorate it with fruit and vegetables. The Sukkah represents the life of the Jewish people in the Wilderness and the end of the Harvest season – *Sukkot* is the plural of *Sukkah*, and so this was the Festival of Tabernacles.

Part of the tradition of Sukkot is to welcome guests, and we have been inviting people into the Sukkah to take photos and to post on social media, with prayers, dreams or wishes for our shared future. Together with SBJC, we also held a charity Harvest Promises Auction, which raised £1100 for the homeless charity DENS and the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC).

Our joint celebrations with SBJC concluded on the Saturday with a joyous service of Simchat Torah in the Court House, when Jews re-roll the Torah scrolls to recommence the annual cycle of scripture readings amid songs and dance. Our Harvest festival is a time of sharing and learning from each other. Our shared hope is that, as we celebrate the things we have in common, we can build a peaceful future together.

By Robin McMorran

Heritage Open Days

On Sunday 10th September a free guided tour of St Peter's Church was offered as part of the Heritage Open Days in Berkhamsted. Visitors learned about the architectural features and hidden gems of this parish church, and the changes to the church fabric that have taken place over the last 800 years.. The tour was led by local heritage expert Dr Christopher Green, and there was an opportunity to purchase a signed copy of his fascinating book about the history of St Peter's Church.



Christopher Green points out features of the mosaic reredos given by parishioners in memory of James Hutchinson, Rector from 1851 – 1871, which is now to be found in the vestry.

Rectory Lane Cemetery

The theme for this year's annual nationwide Heritage Open Days was **Unwrapping Creativity** and On September 16th the **Rectory Lane Cemetery Project** was delighted to organise a celebration of local talent and provide a showcase for the venue as a creative and inspiring space. The packed and diverse programme of free family-friendly activities was possible because of the generosity of our contributors, who all gave their time. The photographs below give you some idea of the cornucopia on offer!



An extract from **Peter Pan, the Musical** was provided by the children of Gobstoppers Theatre Arts & Education



A gorgeous guitar lunchtime interlude from Don Adam Perera added to the relaxed and appreciative vibe and then everyone had the opportunity to join in with some creative dancing with Dacorum Community Dance

A fascinating guided tour, led by a volunteer genealogist, told some of the stories of the creative people of the past who contributed to a flourishing Berkhamsted and are buried here.



Heritage skills were represented by Herts and Beds Woodturners and the Project's own stonemason



Will Yendell of Signs in Stone, who each brought the tools of their trade and demonstrated their considerable expertise.



The Woodturners put some of their lovely products into a raffle on the day, and the takings from that were donated to the Cemetery Project.

The day was captured by the wonderful painterly skills of *en plein air* artist Jackie Henderson. Jackie had already made several visits to the Cemetery, producing some beautiful paintings of the ponds, yew tree avenue and other views. It is hoped to make these into cards which can be sold for the project.



Home baked refreshments were provided, and Rectory Lane honey was sold at the refreshments tent.

If you would like to support by volunteering, please email team@rectorylanecemetery.org.uk

If you would like to make a donation towards the upkeep of the space, it is simple and quick to do on our website: www.rectorylanecemetery/donate

Work on The Bells of St Peter's

By Mike Below

During the Summer the bells of St Peter's were silent for a couple of months whilst Whites of Appleton



undertook work to maintain the bells and ensure they could run more smoothly. To avoid damage, the clock hammers were removed prior to the start and therefore the church clock was unable to strike whilst the work was done. The team started by lowering the bells to the floor in the belfry and then removing all the moving parts. In just

one day, a valiant squad of ten ringers provided assistance to remove all the various bell parts from the bell chamber so that they could all be taken to Whites work yard in Abingdon. Most of the items came down through the hatch that exists in the ceiling above the altar, normally covered by the white dove. The wheels that the ropes go round to provide leverage to make the bells swing were all taken apart and stiffened and with new parts added wherever necessary. The bearings were taken away and reground as required to remove the effects of years of use and all the clappers were renewed to ensure that when replaced, the motion of each clapper within the bell would be smooth and in time. Ellis Ropes manufactured new ropes to replace all those that were showing signs of their age.

The clock hammers had all been taken off the day before Whites arrived, and whilst nothing else was happening in the bell tower they were cleaned up and regreased so that when the time came they would look as smart as all the other new parts.

Six weeks after the parts were taken away, Whites were back and starting to put things together again. The initial exercise was to ensure that the frame was securely bolted together and effectively fixed to the floor which meant fitting various new metal plates into the angles of the wooden bellframe.

Once the room was ready to be used we were able to get a team together again to provide assistance in lifting the bells and their fittings either back up the stairs or through the hatch. Putting everything back took longer. Compared with when similar work was last done many decades ago, it is now possible to measure and adjust things with a very small tolerance for error and this takes time. All of the bells were individually checked to ensure that each pair of bearings were at exactly the same height which allows the axles to turn horizontally which itself reduces future wear, this took significant amounts of time. Once each bell itself was horizontal it was then necessary to check that the clapper would swing in exactly the same line as the bell and that the time taken for the clapper to reach the bell was the same on both strokes. As each bell was finished we were able to fit the new ropes and ensure that they were set to consistent heights to enable easy ringing. Come the middle of July, and with all of the

new ropes in place it was then the moment to get a team of ringers together to try out the newly fitted bells and see how everything sounded and felt.



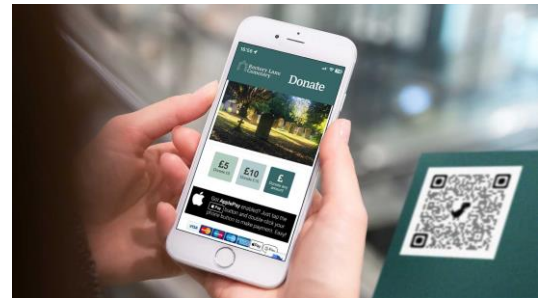
The tenor bell was difficult to ring up properly and needed further attention, but otherwise the bells felt really great. The most noticeable difference was that the members of the band who would normally have limited themselves to ringing the lighter four bells were now able to ring all of the bells. The next day the clock hammers were replaced and the clock was able to strike again.

With everything smoothly back in place, on the 24th of July the ringers were able to ring a quarter peal to mark the successful completion of the work. More photos are available to view on St Peter's website: (stpetersberkhamsted.org.uk)

If anyone is interested in learning to ring the bells, then please get in touch with Mike Below.

mcbelow@gmail.com

Website Updates

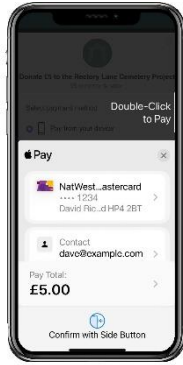


Make a donation! It's a familiar appeal. Charitable organisations depend on generosity, but it's easy to overlook how easy we make it for people to actually give us money. Rattling a collecting tin on the street is a time-honoured method of getting donations from the public, but in these days of credit cards and electronic banking, we have to be ready to adapt if we want to bring in donor income. Cheques – and even hard cash – are now on the way out, but there are many new opportunities for bringing in donations.

Think about the times you've paid for something with a bank card. Years ago, you had to sign a credit card counterfoil with a pen. As technology has advanced, chip and PIN made card transactions a lot smoother, and now we have contactless bank cards.

Continued Overleaf

Furthermore, today's mobile phones (such as Galaxy or iPhone) can be linked securely to your bank card so that you can use your mobile phone as a contactless payment method, making transactions even smoother still. Instead of a PIN number, these phones now use fingerprint or facial recognition – it's really quite amazing. Whether you're buying groceries in Waitrose or tapping an Oystercard to get on the Tube in London, it's that *smoothness* that makes it easier for money to change hands.



In charitable fundraising, we may find that our cause (preserving historic churches and cemeteries) engenders empathy, but when we try to convert that empathy into online donations, it's easy to fail. If you've ever shopped online, think of some of the more difficult experiences you've had – trying to remember your password, finding your bank card, finding your specs, and typing in the 16-digit card number, expiry date and security number (and then probably getting it wrong and having to start all over again). This is *friction* – unnecessary fiddling around that impedes a transaction. In interactive design, we talk about *performance load* – the greater the effort to accomplish a task, the less likely the task will be accomplished successfully. We want to reduce that friction so we don't discourage donations.

On a website, there are many ways we can reduce the *performance load* to make it easier to donate money online. Our family of websites for the Friends of St Peter's, Rectory Lane Cemetery and St Peter's Church are now being updated to encourage more online donations. Website users are offered simple buttons to choose to donate £5, £10 or other amount. It's a quick decision.

We give the option of donating with a bank card but, as mentioned above, typing in the card number can deter some people. But now, if you visit the Friends website using a mobile phone, it's possible to make a donation with GooglePay or ApplePay – simply press a button (and confirm with your phone button) to make the donation. This reduces all the fiddling (the performance load) – especially important if you're standing in the middle of the cemetery asking for an online donation.

There is, of course, no substitute for human persuasion. The next time you're at a heritage event or a cemetery guided tour, encourage our supporters to make a donation online. Look out, too, for the QR codes on posters and leaflets – these are like bar codes, and if you point a mobile phone camera at them, they open a web page without the need to type a long web address (yes – we're reducing the performance load even more!). We hope that by making online payment easier, we may attract increased donations. It will be interesting to see how this new approach works.

www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk/donate

By Robin McMorran

Become a Friend

To join the Friends please use this application form (or a photocopy of it). Alternatively, you can download an application form from the Friends website:

www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk

Personal Details:

Title:
Full Name:
Address:
Postcode:
Telephone:
Email:

Subscriptions

Individual	£12
Family	£20
Corporate	£50

Gift Aid

My subscription payments **should/should not** be treated as Gift Aid donations (delete as appropriate)

Bankers Standing Order

Bank Name:
Bank Address:
Postcode:

Please pay The Friends of St Peter's Church
Great Berkhamsted, A/c No. 64109216, NatWest
Bank (60-02-21) the sum of:

£	Amount in words
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Beginning on :

Date:

and annually thereafter until further notice,
charging my account:

Account Name:
Sort Code:
Account Number:

Date:

Signature:

Please return this form to: Paul Crosland,
11 Upper Hall Park, Berkhamsted, HP4 2NW